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ABSTRACT

"School camping," a term used from the 1920's to 1950's to denote camping programs conducted by schools, later became part of the larger outdoor education movement and experienced a boom period in the 1960's and 1970's, when it came to be called "resident outdoor education." Outdoor education teaches outdoor-related facts, concepts and skills, using the outdoors as both facility and medium for teaching. Environmental education, derived from the environmental movement of the 1960's, has as its goal the improvement of natural and human-made environments through enlightened and improved decision-making; environmental education was strengthened by the passage of P.L. 91-516 (National Environmental Education Act) in 1970 and by subsequent passage of parallel legislation by many states, to mandate or enable school systems to provide environmental education in the curriculum. The environmental and outdoor movements have recently merged forces with environmental education as the ultimate goal and outdoor education as the most effective method and place for teaching toward this goal. Recent emphases are: adventure education, particularly for juvenile delinquents; environmental education for handicapped and older citizens; and urban-oriented nature centers for the 85% of the United States population now living in urban areas. (MH)

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CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF SCHOOL CAMPING, OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF SCHOOL CAMPING, OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a report on the status and future prospects of school camping, outdoor education and environmental education. These terms will be defined according to general consensus in the field.

"School camping" is a term used from the 1920's through the 1950's to denote camping programs conducted by schools. These programs allowed students to live and learn together in a camp setting for several days to a week. They were characterized by a relaxed pace of learning, flexibility in scheduling and total involvement of the teacher with the children in the lessons and day to day living activities of the camp. These programs were an outgrowth of the recreational summer youth camps of the organized camping movement, and were based upon the pragmatic educational philosophy of John Dewey and others. The leaders of these early school camping programs, such as L.B. Sharp and George Donaldson, believed that we learn best through direct experience in real life problem-solving.

School camping later became part of a larger movement in American education, namely outdoor education. Through the course of this movement, the term "outdoor education" has been defined in many ways; however, general consensus today is that "outdoor education" refers to a way of teaching a variety of outdoor-related facts, concepts and skills,

using the outdoors as both a facility and a medium for teaching. The term "school camping" has been generally replaced by the term "resident outdoor education" and rather than be called "school camps," these programs are now more often referred to as "resident outdoor schools." Resident outdoor education experienced a boom period in the 1960's and early 1970's when an abundance of government and private funding sources became available. Educators were able to establish resident programs and to explore innovative ways of teaching in the out of doors. Many teachers went on to become "outdoor education specialists" and were employed full-time to administer or teach in outdoor schools or outdoor education centers.

Outdoor education today utilizes not only resident programs but encampasses the use of the school site as well as field trips to sites in the community for a variety of learning experiences. No matter what the location, outdoor education continues to actively involve students in direct learning about themselves, the out of doors and their community.

The term "environmental education" is derived from the environmental movement of the 1960's, and refers to the presentation of knowledge about the environment and our impact upon it to school students at all levels of education and to the general public. The goal of environmental education

is the improvement of the quality of natural and human-made environments through enlightened and improved decision-making.

In 1970 the U.S. Congress passed, and the President signed, P.L. 91-516, the National Environmental Education Act. That act determined that deterioration of the quality of the environment, and thus our quality of life, is due in part to poor understanding of the environment. It was felt, at that time, that adequate resources for education and informing citizens did not exist. The act set up an Office of Environmental Education in what was then the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to administer grant programs and encourage the development of adequate resources. Thus the 1970's saw the establishment of school and community environmental education programs, the development of curriculum guides and teaching materials, and the training of personnel to provide environmental education through schools and other agencies.

Also during the 1970's many states followed suit by passing parallel environmental education legislation to either mandate or enable local school systems to provide this in the school curriculum.

It appears that the movements of outdoor education and environmental education have, for the most part, merged forces. An indication of this thinking is the more recent appearance of the term "outdoor/environmental education."

Environmental education would seem to provide an ultimate goal for this joint venture and outdoor education to provide the most effective method and place for teaching toward this goal. In other words, environmental education is directed toward some ultimate action or actions that result from enlightened decision-making. These actions relate to the improvement of the environment or at best the avoidance of deterioration of the environment. Outdoor education is concerned with utilizing the outdoors and community resources to place the student in real-life decision-making situations.

What are the future prospects for these fields? With nearly 85% of the U.S. population now living in urban areas, greater attention must be given to outdoor/environmental education for this urbanized population. Urban-oriented nature centers must continue to be developed to provide educational experiences for enlightened decision-making. Children and adults alike must be taught how to use the outdoors for leisure pursuits in a manner both safe and enjoyable for them and in such a way as to utilize natural resources with minimum impact on these resources.

Statistics show that more and more people are pursuing risk-oriented, high adventure outdoor recreation. As a result, experiential adventure education programs have emerged in recent years. These programs teach individual and

group skills related to risk-oriented outdoor pursuits. Some programs are run as part of the programming of resident outdoor schools. Others are run through municipal recreation departments; community agencies such as the "Y", Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts; and through commercial enterprises. An important development in this area is the utilization of adventure education as a treatment made for juvenile delinquents. Outward Bound was a leader in this development but many other similar programs have also emerged.

Outdoor environmental education for the handicapped and the older citizens has received relatively little attention until recently. Examples of new and exciting programs in this area include adventure programs for those in wheelchairs, resident outdoor education for special education students, horseback riding for the physically and mentally handicapped, and senior adult camps for older citizens. Therapeutic recreation specialists are increasingly utilizing outdoor programs to challenge, revitalize and provide new leisure directions for persons with handicapping conditions.

To wonder about the outdoors, to want to have interactive experiences with the elements, and to manipulate the environment for our own betterment are all basic human needs. To meet these needs we will continue to require properly trained educators, outdoor recreation professionals and

environmentally aware community leaders to address the environmental quality issues and the outdoor leisure trends of the years ahead.

*Paper presented to the annual convention of the Pennslyvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; December 5, 1982.